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CANADIAN ITALIAN BUSINESS
& PROFESSIONAL MEN'S ASS'N
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① Origin & Hist

② Conf.

③ Readings (PS)

The Secretary,

Royal Commission of Inquiry on Bilingualism

and Biculturalism,

P.O.B. 1508,

Ottawa, Ontario.

Dear Sir;

The Canadian-Italian Business and Professional Men's Association of Quebec Inc., is composed of businessmen, industrialists and professionals of Italian origin residing in the Province of Quebec.

Five hundred members belong to this group.

The purpose and objects of the Association are numerous, namely:-

a) To unite business or professional persons, merchants, industrialists, carrying on business, or exercising their profession and residing in the Province of Quebec, into an Association, to cooperate in the development and general welfare of the population.

b) To act as an intermediate body for the promotion of a proper politic to serve our ethnic group, to preserve its rights, to respect its rights, customs and the order established in order to have a better understanding between the various groups and for the progress of the common good in Canada.

c) To promote commercial, cultural and economic exchanges between its members, educate and inform its members with conferences and briefs.

Our Association, fully aware of the primordial role of the findings and recommendations suggested by your Board of Inquiry, submits to it the present brief with a view to inform it on the growing contribution of Canadians of our ethnic origin and to assist it as best it can, by its own recommendations.

We would like at this point, to underline the gigantic task already accomplished by the Laurendeau-Dunton Commission and the ponderous responsibilities which fall on it as a result of this mandate conferred by a ministerial decree dating July 19th, 1963.

The subject of our present study is, of course, restricted to that portion of your mandate which deals more particularly with our ethnic group although we make bold in our conclusions to approach the question of

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equality of the two founding nations of the Canadian Confederation.

In this dissertation, we shall give a short account of the origin and history of Canadian-Italians in Canada, followed by an enumeration of the various contributions made by our ethnic group in the different categories such as art, music, science, architecture, industry, etc.

ORIGIN AND SETTLEMENT

1) Italian immigration to Canada began in the early part of the 19th century. Italians first settled in neighboring European countries and later in South America. Near the end of the 19th century, a great majority decided to proceed towards North America.

2) Most of the immigrants came from the south of Italy. The population explosion of the latter region together with unfavorable economic conditions forced the indigent to leave their native soil. Italian immigration to Canada was at first on a small scale but gradually increased towards the end of the 19th century.

3) However, immigration became steadier only when the Canadian Pacific Railways began building its railroad westward. At that time, most immigrants resided in Canada on a provisory basis, depending on the employment fluctuations. Railroad companies and contractors would employ Italians through an Italian agency in Montreal.

4) At the end of World War I, the transitory characteristic of the Italians' life changed. Immigrants were no longer recruited solely among the male sex. Young women arrived daily to join their husbands. The men had had the foresight to amass enough savings to secure small businesses such as restaurants, barber shops and shoe repair shops. With the assistance of their wives, the immigrants settled on a firmer basis on Canadian soil, it is only after World War II, however, that large scale immigration to Canada began.

In fact, Italians seeking stabler economic conditions and steadier employment immigrated to Canada in greater number.

According to the federal statistics they numbered 223,000 from January 1st 1946 to December 31st 1958.

VARIOUS ORGANIZATIONS

5) At first, the Italians formed benefit societies whose principal aims were mutual aid, fraternity and financial assistance. The two more important of these societies were the Order of the Sons of Italy and the Italo-Canadian Order who are still in existence.

6) Other organizations were smaller in scope,

founded around 1925 but nevertheless classified as benefit societies; although their aims were purely social and cultural. The Dante Alighieri Society, for example, concentrated its efforts on the promulgation of the Italian language and culture. The role of other societies was to ~~promote~~ culture and sports activities. These organizations played an important part in the life of immigrants recently arrived to Canada. These immigrants obtained from these societies spiritual and material assistance when accidents or sickness struck them, as these organizations provided the material support.

7) Their membership decreased considerably

in recent years, of the main factors being that Canadian-Italians born in Canada no longer resort to such aid. Native Canadian-Italians rather seek insurance plans against sickness and accidents and Canadian recreation centers. Even the newly landed do not join these benefit societies, several in fact, finding in their own families the succor and friendship made available by these associations or societies.

8) The new organizations represent today

different sections. The Canadian-Italian Business and Professional Men's Association is a typical example. This Association brings together Canadian professionals and businessmen who are inclined to react and to organize themselves according to a Canadian way of life. The other groups or societies are founded to promote sports, ~~Italian~~ culture or to introduce Neo-Canadians to Canadian life.

9) This brief historical account points out

that the first years of an immigrant in alien soil are dedicated especially to his material welfare and that of his family, but later he will integrate in his adopted milieu and participate in local life in all its fields of activity.

CONTRIBUTIONS TO CANADA

Italian contributions range over a wide variety of fields and reflect the vitality and energy of this group, their capacity for hard work and their appreciation of the artistic. In the early days, one of their main contributions was the hard, back-breaking labour which they put into building railways, roads, canals, sewers, harbour installations and other construction projects which transformed Canada from a vast wilderness into a modern industrial state.

Today, Canadian-Italians are at work on the construction of subways, industrial plants, housing developments and other projects.

In the field of architecture and town planning, many Canadian-Italians have contributed with their knowledge to the preparation of master plans for many towns and cities in Canada. In the manufacture of food products, a number of Italians have gained prominence, in the restaurant business, Canadians have been introduced to typically Italian dishes and have come to appreciate the style of Italian cooking.

Ever since their early days in Canada many Italians have worked as tailors and dressmakers or in the manufacture of clothing and textiles. With their strong sense of form and design, they came to excel in the various branches of the clothing industry. Today many of the large clothing manufacturers and dressmaking firms employ Italians as designers and in other capacities.

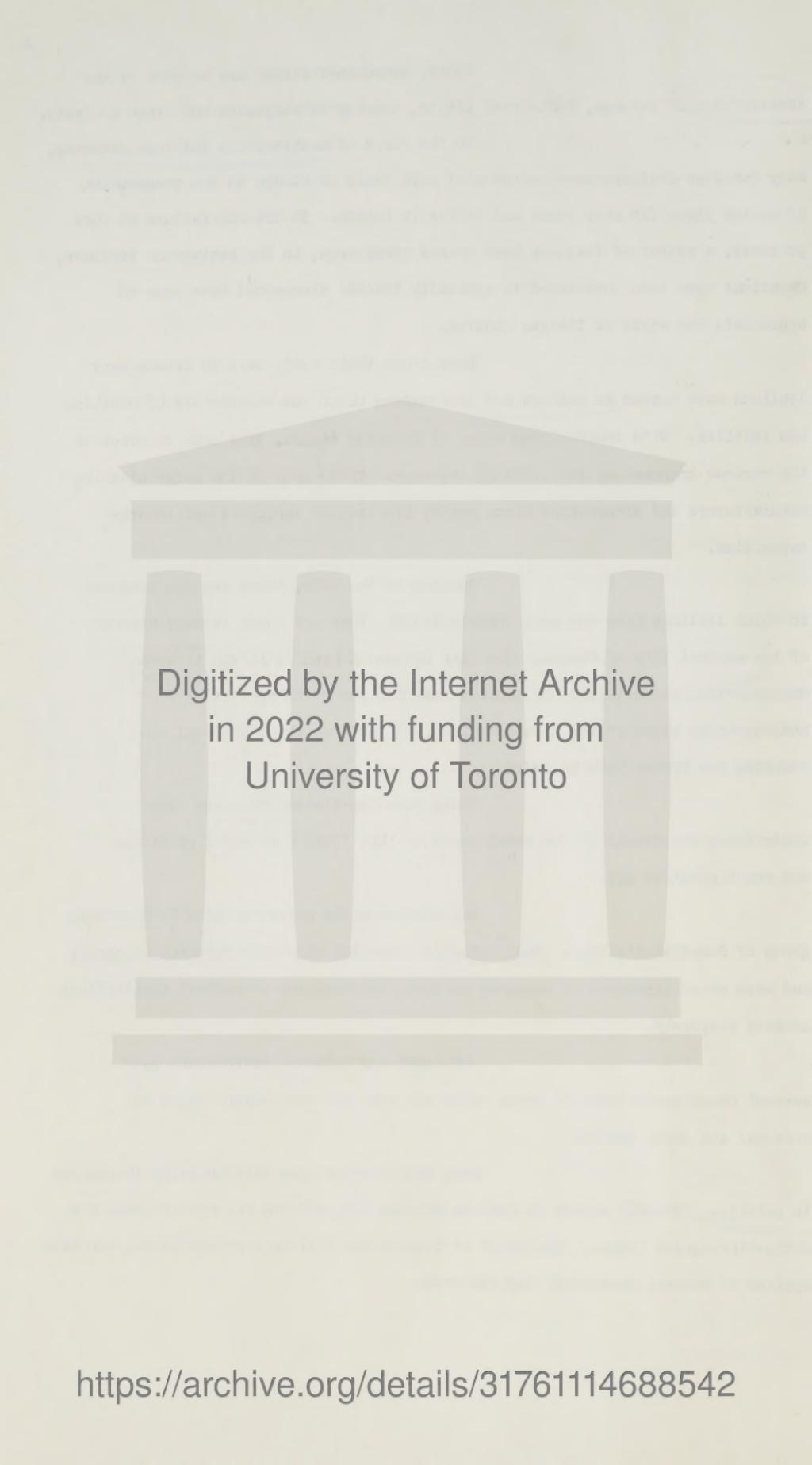
Turning to the arts, there are few branches in which Italians have not made contributions. They are found in many aspects of the musical life of Canada. The same situation applies in the theatre, Canadian-Italians acquired acclaim and fame for their interpretation of Shakespearian plays at the Stratford Festival, such as Bruno Gerrussi who received the Tyrone Guthrie Award.

Young Canadian-Italian painters have contributed enormously to the development of this field with mural paintings and non-figurative art.

The science world attracted equally a certain group of Canadian-Italians. Many scientist executed extensive research on cancer and were named directors of research centers, laboratories or medical institutions created purposely.

The legal and notarial professions have several Canadian-Italians in their ranks and some of them became judges in criminal and civic courts.

Many Canadian-Italians distinguished themselves in politics. Several mayors of Italian descent were elected in various towns and cities throughout Canada. The House of Commons has Italian representation, the same applies to several provincial legislatures.



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RECOMMENDATIONS

Italian immigrants who settled in Canada are faced with imperious needs, the main one being a mastery or at least a rudimentary knowledge of one of the two official languages, in order to make a living and to sooner integrate in his environment. The solution to this problem is urgent.

During this transitory period, the newly arrived must adapt to the cultural and social Canadian contingent and to secure a stable position that will permit them to attain the normal standard of living of Canadians which surround them.

It must be pointed out that the language adopted by the immigrant will determine which culture he will favour, anglophile or franco-phile as may be the case.

7. Nationality It is regrettable that the choice language to be adopted is all too often determined by purely materialistic factors such as the proximity of schools or the place of residence of the immigrant. In the provinces where the majority are English-speaking, Italian immigrants favoured English and consequently adopted the English culture.

In the Province of Quebec, the social structure being different, it is regrettable to realize that the choice of language was left to chance or to purely materialistic factors.

To facilitate the integration of the newly arrived to these contingencies is the primordial role of the State if it wishes to turn out full fledged citizens completely aware of their contribution to Canada.

It is here that come into play competent and understanding persons, representatives or interpreters capable to communicate with the newly arrived in their own language in order to enlighten them in the fields pertaining to their relations and responsibilities to public bodies and the different government agencies.

Their economic, social and cultural role could thus be urged on in the different fields of human activity. Thus, for example, courses in arts and crafts in institutions of specialized training could be made more easily available.

In the Ministry of Agriculture, a few specialists could be assigned to study rural settlement so that those among them who wish to settle in the Province as farmers could benefit from all possible advantages to realize their aspirations.

In the Ministry of Finance and of the Postmaster

General, the role of qualified persons would be to establish a direct contact between the State and those newly under its jurisdiction.

One such fine example was the nomination of a representative of Italian origin to the Montreal Catholic School Board. We believe that such a nomination rendered the function of the Montreal Catholic School Board more effective and more valid towards the Italian community and gives an added safeguard to the cultural contribution of our ethnic group.

Private institutions such as banks, credit unions and finance companies have taken this point of view and to this day it has been very rewarding for them.

Canadian-Italians who have settled in the country for several decades are faced with needs different from those of the new immigrants. On the contrary, they have had time to integrate into the Canadian way of life and today wish to perfect their knowledge of their mother tongue so as to safeguard their social heritage and traditions.

There exist two means for Italian-Canadians to ~~hyphenate~~ their new personality, acquired as a result of their integration in the adopted country, and the personality bequeathed by their ancestral origin and race.

To renounce the first personality by refusing to adapt to the Canadian way of life is to agree to become an anchorite by drawing away from the life around him and the responsibilities which fall on him.

To abdicate to the second is deliberately to impoverish his personality and to withdraw from the laws of nature which demand the full broadening of human personality.

Weekly courses in Italian are now given for those who have dropped out or completed their studies and who wish to improve or perfect their knowledge of the mother tongue.

It would be worthwhile to give grants, that is, from the high school level, not only to Italian speaking students but also to all students of whichever ethnic origin, provided that this ethnic group be sufficiently representative in the heart of the Canadian community, and to students who wish to learn or to master their mother tongue. Thus, they could, according to their cultural level, propagate the influence of the literary and artistic traditions that characterize their respective communities.

The brief exposé and the recommendations aforementioned do not, however, solve the ticklish problem of Italian-Canadians facing the two founding ethnic groups that meet each other in the ~~Province of Quebec~~.

Our recommendations are, we trust, constructive suggestions on the part of our ethnic group which makes up but a segment of the Canadian population.

Italian-Canadians residing in the other provinces are not called upon to pronounce themselves on the existing conflict. In fact, but one problem faces them, that of adapting themselves to and integrating in the Canadian way of life of the majority of those provinces.

On the other hand, Italian-Canadians in the Province of Quebec integrated into one or the other culture seek and desire but one thing, to become Canadian citizens in the wide sense of the word and not in a disparaging sense as some intend it to be nowadays.

It is the duty of the Canadian government, in our humble opinion, to safeguard both cultures and both languages and by doing this, without by it giving up a new meaning of the term "Canadian" which could find expression in the heart of every Canadian subject in a profound and ardent sentiment, that we are first and foremost Canadians, that is citizens of one and the same country no matter to which ethnic group we belong.

In other words, Canadians of whichever ethnic group or religious denomination, especially those minority ethnic groups, who are bound to both founding nations, should not be caught in the constant dilemma of having to choose or take side with one or the other party, but should feel free in the Province of Quebec as in the other provinces and to call himself Canadian of such origin while respecting the laws of individual in a whole.

For this purpose, we believe that it would be advisable to create a ministry of Cultural Affairs of Minority Ethnic Groups whose object would be to actualize the following facts:

A) To represent adequately and equitably the minority ethnic groups who according to the 1961 census make up 14% of the Canadian population.

B) To valorize and promote the different cultures that come to join the two cultures of the founding groups.

C) To accelerate by means of consequence and according to a normal maturity a logical and rational integration of the different

ethnic groups which make up the whole nation.

The Fathers of the Confederation being

proud of the cultural heritage and their ethnic origin and believing in a Canadian union of the differences laid down the fundamental principles of Canadian life when they drew the B.N.A. Act.

This was the first step in the making and

building of the Canadian nation, that is, a society fit to hyphenate the two founding races to give it a Canadian character.

Since 1867, ethnic groups of diverse

cultures have joined the two founding groups to make up the present Canadian whole. Because the whole is heterogeneous, it is imperative to find and emphasize our common denominator. In fact, we believe that it is possible to amalgamate the different cultures which do not oppose but complement each other, to coalesce ideas while preserving the legitimate aspirations of each group which make it up and to link up the other minority ethnic groups with a Canadian nation whose future will be limited only by the intelligence, vivacity and imagination of the subjects who make it up.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

1) Freedom of the City for the two cultures

and the two official languages of the country throughout Canada.

2) To respect the rights of minority ethnic

groups and to see to the growth of these groups in the activities of common interest in the life of the country, in such a way that the individuals who make up these groups be acknowledged or recognized first of all and especially by Canadians.

3) The creation of a Ministry of Cultural

Affairs of the Minority Ethnic Groups.

4) Respect of the principle of equality

between the two founding races, throughout Canada, which must be reflected in all fields of human activities, such as education, public office, etc.....

We hope that these thoughts may contribute to the final solution of the problems relating to biculturalism and we wish to thank you for the interest which you may study our recommendations.

FRANK VINCCELLI - Chairman of the Association
VINCENZO RADINO - Chairman -
Orientation Committee

Nov. 5th, 1965



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